



# Animal Health and Food Safety Newsletter

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & FORESTRY

MIKE STRAIN DVM, COMMISSIONER

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## A message from Commissioner Mike Strain D.V.M.



The Office of Animal Health and Food Safety has been charged with helping protect the state's food supply. Now that our joint Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and LSU AgCenter Agricultural Chemistry Laboratory is fully certified as a Food Emergency Response Network laboratory, we'll be better able to serve the needs of the public.

Another food emergency that is closer to home is food insecurity, which is at an all-time high in America. Food insecurity means that during some time in the year, families are finding it difficult to put nutritious food on their dinner tables due to economic constraints. Please consider donating to your local food bank during the holiday season and throughout the year.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays,

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### LDAF News

#### Brucellosis Vaccination in Louisiana

Commissioner Mike Strain announced recently that the LDAF will continue to provide Brucellosis vaccine and tags to Louisiana veterinarians free of charge throughout 2010 and LDAF staff will continue to vaccinate heifers free of charge for the next year.

### **Change in Brucellosis Laboratory Services Beginning January 1, 2010**

Due to the success of the Brucellosis Eradication Program in Louisiana, available federal program funds are being redirected to states in the Greater Yellowstone area where brucellosis continues to be a problem. Louisiana was awarded Brucellosis Class Free status July 27, 2000. The LDAF and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services continued to provide full diagnostic services until March 2, 2009, when the brucellosis laboratory in Baton Rouge was closed due to funding cuts. Since then, all blood samples have been sent to the Texas Animal Health Commission's (TAHC) brucellosis laboratory for diagnostic services at costs supported by USDA APHIS VS. However after December 31, 2009, TAHC's brucellosis laboratory will no longer be providing serological diagnostic services for brucellosis or pseudorabies on private treaty tests (tests for sale, show, certified/validated herds and international or interstate movement purposes) from private Louisiana veterinarians. Beginning January 1, 2010, serological services for private treaty tests must be procured at a commercial diagnostic laboratory of the private practitioner's choice. For a list of commercial laboratories, contact the LDAF's Veterinary Health Division at 225-925-3980.

### **Equine Piroplasmiosis Disclosed on Texas Ranch Five Louisiana Horses Affected**

On October 12, 2009, Texas livestock health officials quarantined a large ranch in Kleberg County Texas after a 7-year-old quarter horse mare became ill and tested positive for equine piroplasmiosis (EP). EP is a tick-borne disease caused by the hemoprotozoan parasites *Babesia caballi* and *B. equi*. The disease can be transmitted by ticks or by improperly disinfected needles, tattoo pliers, or surgical instruments. Until this outbreak, EP was considered to be a foreign animal disease. By November 3<sup>rd</sup>, results from samples of the remaining horses on the index ranch in Texas indicated *B. equi* infection on all four divisions of the ranch with an overall 80% infection rate. The testing summary on the index ranch is presented in the following chart:

<b>Herd</b>	<b># Horses Tested</b>	<b># Positive</b>
Index Ranch, Division A	281	209
Index Ranch, Division B	36	36
Index Ranch, Division C	10	10
Index Ranch, Division D	33	33
Total	360	289

Currently, there are 289 positive horses under quarantine on the index ranch in Texas. The remaining positive horses are located on other premises in the following states: Alabama, 2; California, 2; Florida, 5; Georgia, 1; Louisiana, 5; Minnesota, 1; North Carolina, 2; New Jersey, 4; Tennessee, 1; Texas, 37; Utah, 1 and Wisconsin, 1.

The five positive horses (out of a total of 10 tested) in Louisiana are located on three ranches (two in southwestern Louisiana and one in the northwestern part of the state). Each of the five horses has been isolated and is restricted from movement. Thus far, 456 cohorts (horses in contact with a +) have been tested in 15 states and all have tested negative. No further infection has been found in the horses traced to Louisiana during the period of 2004 to 2006. The epidemiology and testing of exposed horses is continuing. Important movement restrictions of horses are coming into effect soon. Louisiana has an emergency order requiring horses from counties that have piroplasmosis positive horses to have a permit and meet other standards to be able to enter the state. Keep looking for new interstate or event regulations during 2010!

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## **Influenza**

There has been much news lately about the various strains of influenza that are affecting humans and livestock, using a variety of names such as H1N1, swine flu, bird flu, pandemic flu and seasonal flu. Since this is the flu season, some basic definitions will clarify these types of flu. Avian influenza in poultry is not the same as pandemic influenza which is not the same as seasonal influenza. The following excerpts were taken from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the USDA APHIS, and the Ag Preparedness Center at <https://www.agpreparedness.org/>.

Avian Influenza (AI) or “bird flu” is a disease caused by a virus that infects predominantly domestic poultry and wild birds. There is a bird flu “season” just like for humans, and some subtypes of bird flu are worse than others. AI is classified as low pathogenic or high pathogenic depending on their combination of H and N proteins (hemagglutinin and neuraminidase) found on the surface of the virus. Low path AI has been found in the U.S. and can cause mild symptoms (such as ruffled feathers and a drop in egg production) to death in birds. High path AI has not yet been found in the U.S., and the H5N1 strain found in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe is usually fatal to birds and can be transmitted to humans. Most cases of avian influenza infection in humans have resulted from contact with infected domesticated poultry or surfaces contaminated with secretion/excretions from infected birds. The spread of avian influenza from person to person has been reported but has been limited, inefficient and unsustainable.

Seasonal flu occurs every year and these viruses can spread easily from person-to-person. Immunity to these viruses may exist from past infections or prior vaccinations and vaccinations are readily available.

Pandemic influenza is a general term describing a worldwide human influenza outbreak caused by a new flu virus for which people have little or no immunity and the need for vaccine may exceed supply. For more information, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/qa.htm>

Influenza A (H1N1) or “swine flu” is a virus believed to have formed from a triple assortment of genetic material from swine, avian and human influenza viruses. According to the USDA, H1N1 flu is not a foodborne disease but is a respiratory disease. Species affected by the virus include humans, birds, pigs, tigers, leopards, ferrets,

domestic cats and now dogs. A link to a chart showing the USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratories presumptive and confirmatory test results for animal samples from the 2009 pandemic H1N1 influenza virus can be found at: [www.usda.gov/H1N1flu](http://www.usda.gov/H1N1flu). Disease outbreaks worldwide can be tracked on Google's Health Map at the following link: <http://healthmap.org/en>.

### **Rabies Alert**

The Louisiana Public Health Veterinarian, Dr. Gary Balsamo, confirmed that a man in Iberia Parish was bitten by a stray cat that tested positive for rabies. The head was harvested with proper precautions by a veterinarian and no other people were exposed. The strain of rabies is not known at this time. This is a reportable disease to our office within 24 hours after making a diagnosis or tentative diagnosis of any such disease.

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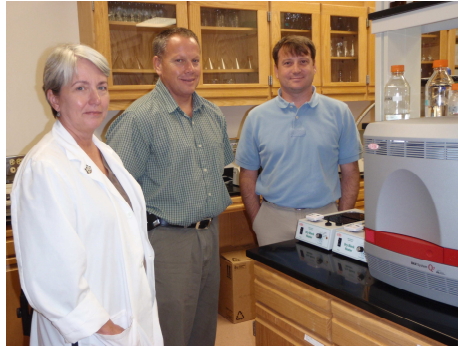
### **Emergency Management News**

The year 2009 has been an eventful year for the Office of Animal Health and Food Safety. There have been several changes, including the promotion of our Assistant Commissioner Dr. Brent Robbins, to Deputy Commissioner and Acting State Veterinarian; the retirement of State Veterinarian Dr. Henry Moreau; and the renaming of the office to include its expanded mission of food safety. The Animal Health Emergency Management Committee hopes to develop into an Emergency Management Division with the appointment of full-time ESF 11 coordinator, Mr. John Walther. The Foreign Animal Disease Rapid Response Team has grown into an all-hazards agricultural incident management team with the formation of an LDAF dedicated Incident Command System (ICS) command and general staff.

LDAF's agricultural response team consists of branches, divisions and units that reflect the responsibilities addressed in the department's emergency plan called Emergency Support Function 11, or ESF-11. Among those responsibilities are the evacuation and sheltering of "Critical Transportation Needs" pets, food deliveries to designated emergency shelters and emergency fuel allocation. LDAF's emergency partners are listed as Technical Specialists on the team's ICS chart and include governmental agencies such as the USDA, Veterinary Services (VS), Plant, Protection, and Quarantine (PPQ), and Animal Care (AC), and the LSU and Southern Agricultural Centers; and non-governmental organizations (NGO) such as the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association and humane including United Animal Nations, Noah's Wish, the International Foundation for Animal Welfare, the American Humane Association, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Louisiana State Animal Response Team.

The Department has expanded its food protection role by supporting the LSU Agricultural Chemistry Lab's application to become a member of the Food Emergency Response Network (FERN), a nation-wide system of food testing labs dedicated to rapid response to a foodborne emergency. LDAF recently purchased lab equipment with State Homeland Security Grant Program funds to increase the lab's capability to respond to a large scale foodborne contamination. These efforts were rewarded on October 5, 2009 when the Ag Chemistry lab was awarded FERN status. The Ag Chemistry lab is a joint

effort between the Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry and the LSU Agricultural Extension Service.



Dr. Janet Simonson of the Ag Chemistry Lab, Dr. Thomas Beacorn, USDA-FSIS-FERN, Dr. Mark Leblanc, Director of the Ag Chemistry Lab.

### Emergency Response News

The Louisiana State Animal Response Team (LSART) has purchased a Mobile Incident Response Vehicle in partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA®). The new response trailer was unveiled at a ceremony at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine on September 18, 2009.



Dr. Becky Adcock, Richard Wood, Pamela Bradley, Mauri Presedo, Dr. Becky McConnico, and Dave Schlotzhauer attend the LSART response trailer unveiling.

### Late Breaking Emergency Response News

Extensive rainfall in Louisiana caused flooding in two coastal parishes resulting in cattle being stranded by high waters. Cattlemen in Lafourche and St. Charles Parishes moved their cattle to higher ground but this left many cattle concentrated in areas that couldn't support the increased numbers. LDAF responded to parish requests to the State Emergency Operations Center by activating its ESF 11 Command to coordinate the transport of donated hay to the stranded cattle. Robert Joyner, Executive Vice President of the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association secured the donated hay from the University of Louisiana at Monroe Foundation. LSU AgCenter Extension Agents Mike Hebert and Rene Schmit helped identify the specific needs in their parishes and LDAF dispatched



two 18-wheeler flatbed trucks from its Forestry Protection Division to deliver the hay December 18, 2009. The Cattlemen's Association is part of the LDAF emergency response team and they are very important in securing resources to help people in the agricultural sector during an emergency. The LSU AgCenter is also part of the team and is vital in identifying local needs and staging areas for resources. LDAF forestry personnel are currently trucking additional hay donated by Poultry and Egg Commission member B.J. Sonnier. This hay is desperately needed to hold the cattle over until the water recedes and the pastures can recover.

Our thanks go out to all those who helped in this response.



Producers round up cattle and haul the delivered round bales of hay to stranded cattle.

Please feel free to offer comments, articles, or questions from the field on our Office of Animal Health and Food Safety Newsletter. You may reach us at 225-925-3980 or email us at the addresses below:

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